

Milan. “The Economic Capital of Italy is Not in Hiding Anymore...”

O. C. (January 07, 2014)



Milan as seen through the eyes of its new Mayor Giuliano Pisapia. Why the largest industrial and financial center of Italy is becoming one of the country's primary destinations for tourists from all over the world

Milan is a city well worth discovering and yet it is often perceived by tourists as a distant second compared to Venice, Florence and Rome. What do you think a tourist should know about Milan? Where should he or she start?

For the past, you might be right. But Milan is the economic capital of Italy, one of the capital cities of



European culture, and it's not in hiding anymore. The increasing number of tourists from all over the world who come here are proof of that. We're working to make the city even more welcoming, especially given the important [Expo 2015 event](#) [2], for which we're expecting 20 million visitors, a million from China alone.

Walking around Milan is great. The center and historic suburbs, the piazzas and courtyards, the canals of Milan – they all offer surprises. But today I'd also recommend getting around the city's neighborhoods and parks by bike. BikeMi, our bike sharing network that has also been successful in combatting city traffic, is available to the Milanese and tourists. I, for one, love pedaling around the city.

Who are today's Milanese? How have they changed? The late Lucio Dalla once sang, Milan “asks you a question in German and answers you in Sicilian.” It's reminiscent of New York. Has immigration made Milan a “melting pot”? First and foremost, I'm thinking of the earlier wave of immigration from Southern Italy, and then of today's wave of non-European immigrants.

Well, nowadays Milan “asks you a question in German and answers you in English, Russian, or Chinese.” Traditionally, Milan has been an open and inclusive city. The city is in the swing of transforming and developing, thanks in part to the many foreign communities that live and work in the capital of the North. In our globalized world, the integration of diverse cultures and the policies aimed at fostering them are indispensable for building the large metropolis of the future.

Which places do you love most? Where do you go to get away from it all and be alone with your thoughts?

The one that stands out is the [Rotonda della Besana](#) [3], which fascinated me as a kid and where I used to take my siblings's kids to play. Today this place that combines beauty and history – the sacred and profane – is a cultural center that has been restored to the city. Before I became mayor, my law office was located nearby. To get away and reflect, how could I not be lured by the magic silence of Besana's courtyard? And now that I steward the city, I want to transform it further; the Rotonda will become a playground for children too. A gift for them and their families.

Traffic, safety, pollution, car sharing, bike sharing, policies that advocate for immigrants, homosexuals, and young people – those are a lot of very different types of problems for a mayor who wants to make progressive changes to city government. And a lot of work. One of your notable slogans is “Refined Force.” That sure is very different from Giuliani's “[Zero Tolerance](#) [4].” How is it going?

In times of crisis, like the one we've seen in recent years, it's not easy to manage a city; insecurity is burrowed everywhere and uncertainty about the future pinions the plans of citizens, families and institutions. My motto is “participation,” because I am convinced that by working together you can escape the nightmare of a crisis that has struck the middle class and, most especially, young people. That's another reason that, in the two years of my administration, we have sought to involve the populace in many controversial projects. Take Area C, for example, the campaign against congestion we launched to reduce traffic in the city center and make the air safer to breathe. There was resistance at first, but we forged ahead with conviction. Today the results confirm the route we took was the right one. Easy and sustainable mobility is no longer a utopian dream. As for safety, I don't believe in “militarized” cities, but in the active collaboration between institutions that should guarantee our safety.

What places in Milan must you absolutely see, even if you only have a few hours, and why?

The list is long. But, if you had just a few hours, I'd suggest starting with the Piazza del Duomo, the



heart of Milan that faces the Palazzo Reale with its grand art exhibits; the Museo del Novecento with its collection of contemporary art; and the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele, Milan’s gateway, which leads to La Scala, the world’s temple of opera. But the very modern Piazza Gae Aulenti, with its skyscrapers, is worth a visit. It’s the symbol of where Milan is headed in the future. Another must is the Castello Sforzesco that opens out onto the green area of Parco Sempione, our version of Central Park. For those who just have to go shopping, you can’t skip a stroll around the Quadrilatero della Moda. It’s a trip into the marvels of “Made in Italy” and the “Italian Way of Life.”

One question about Expo Milan 2015. Could you briefly explain what it is for American readers? How will it transform Milan?

Expo Milan 2015 will be the biggest post-crisis global event. Thanks to its theme, “Feeding the Planet: Energy for Life,” we have reached a record 138 participating countries. Food safety, water as a common good, the campaign against waste, sustainable development: we can’t postpone giving concrete answers to these bonafide planetary emergencies. We must build a more sustainable and just world. In the search for a new model for development, Expo Milan signals a shift from industrial development to sustainable development in the era of consciousness. The Universal Exposition will be a window onto extremely innovative ideas and technologies. That’s why coming to Milan in 2015 will be a must for everyone: political institutions, science centers, businesses and tourists. Smart City Milan, which is being developed alongside the Expo smart site, awaits you.

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[2] <http://en.expo2015.org/>

[3] http://www.turismo.milano.it/wps/portal/?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=it/situr/home

[4] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zero_tolerance